27: St. Clair & Lowie U,E-4,5 (no date) 1909
NO6 Comanche NO6

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27: St. Clair & Lowie U,E-4,5 (no date) 1909
NO6 Comanche NO6
Wind River NQ19

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SHOSHONE AND COMANCHE TALES

COLLECTED BY H. H. ST. CLAIR, 2D; EDITED BY R. H. LOWIE

C W 128 124 101

THE following tales were recorded by Mr. H. H. St. Clair, 2d, among the Wind River Shoshone of Wyoming and the Comanche, and are edited on the basis of his interlinear renderings. As a collection of Shoshone myths from Lemhi, Idaho, has been published recently,[1] Wind River duplicates are given only in abstracts referring to points of difference.

W 539 171

The most noteworthy feature of the new Shoshone myths is the occurrence of certain widespread motives not obtained from the Lemhi Indians. Foremost among these is the marriage of two girls to stars. Very significant details connect the Wind River version with that of the Blackfoot. In both cases, the girls, after having wished for star-husbands, are delayed by the loss of their baggage; in both the star-child disappears on the infraction of a taboo, and becomes a star. The eye-juggler motive is naturally joined to a story, shared by the Lemhi and Comanche, of blind Coyote's adventures; a similar sequel occurs in the Blackfoot variant. The magic flight turns up in an ogre tale not related to the published Dzŏ'avits myths, which has also absorbed the crane-leg bridge motive of the Lemhi Bear and Deer story. Unfortunately, the cosmogonic fragments do not elucidate the relation of Ă'pŏ ("Our Father") to Wolf and Coyote, with whom the Lemhi occasionally identify him, while at other times he appears as a distinct character. In the colorless account of the Deluge, birds are sent out for land, but the diving for earth is not explicitly mentioned. The belief that the crow turned black in consequence of having devoured the drowned Indians is common to the Wind River and Lemhi people, though among the latter it was voiced only in conversation with the writer, and not in connection with the tale.

C 539 171

W 825

The Comanche myths are far too few in number to permit a thorough-going comparison with Shoshone folk-lore. The eye-juggler motive

C W 539 171 113

[1] Lowie, "The Northern Shoshone" (*Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History*, vol. ii, part ii, pp. 236–302).

[p. 265]

27: St. Clair & Lowie U,E-4,5 (no date) 1909
NO6 Comanche NO6
Wind River NQ19

C W 539 171 C 539 171 occurs in the same combination as in the Wind River version; the union of these two elements seems to be peculiar to these Shoshonean groups. In one myth, the widely diffused story of the hoodwinked dancers precedes Coyote's defeat in a handicap race as told at Lemhi. "The Deserted Children" joins a familiar Prairie tale with an ogre story. Coyote's humiliation of a white fellow-trickster is exactly paralleled in Lemhi mythology. The account of the liberation of hoarded buffalo for the benefit of mankind has rather close homologues among the Blackfoot, Arapaho, and Gros Ventre. In an interesting composite myth, both the regulation of the seasons and the origin of death are accounted for. W [539] [171] The first part is a somewhat more elaborate parallel of published Lemhi and Wind River narratives. As in Blackfoot mythology, the mortality of man is determined by the sinking of a rock.

1. THE BUNGLING HOST[1]

(Shoshone Story)

W 539 [171] (The animals visited are Beaver, Owl, and Elk. The only noteworthy peculiarity of this version, as compared with that from Lemhi, is the resuscitation of Beaver's children when their bones are thrown into the water.)

2. PORCUPINE AND COYOTE[2]

(Shoshone Story)

(One of Coyote's children takes the place of Coyote's excrement as his guardian.)

3. COYOTE'S FLIGHT

(Shoshone Story)

Coyote was walking along. He saw a bear digging. Coyote looked at him through the grass. "You bob-tailed bear!" he cried. The bear charged on him, but Coyote ran off. Then he cried, "You crop-eared bear!" The bear ran towards him. Coyote said, "You are a bear, you cannot catch me." The bear pursued him. When he was close to him, Coyote cried, "You cannot run through the brush," and took to the brush; but the bear followed him through the brush. When he was close to the fugitive, Coyote cried, "You are a bear, you cannot swim." He jumped into the water. The bear followed in; Coyote got to the other side, and ran on. "You are a bear, you cannot run on the prairie." But again the bear was gaining on him. Coyote got to a buffalo. "O brother-in-law! the bear is after me." — "Well, stand behind me!" The bear caught up to them. The buffalo advanced, hooked and killed him. Thus he saved Coyote.

Coyote walked on. He met a stranger. The man told him, "Over there on that hill there is a bad rock. If any one takes any of the pile of beads

[1] Lowie, *l. c.* p. 265. [2] *Ibid.* p. 267.

27: St. Clair & Lowie U,E-4,5 (no date) 1909
NO6 Comanche NO6
Wind River NQ19

on it, it will pursue and kill him." — "Is that so?" Coyote went to the rock, took some beads, scratched dirt on it, and went away. The rock followed his tracks. (Then follows the story of the rolling rock.)[1]

W 539

4. DREADNOUGHT

(Shoshone Story)

A young man was walking along. He met a stranger, who said to him, "You must not lie down in the cracks of the rocks. Some bad men will poke around there to find you." When it got dark, the young man, nevertheless, went to the rocks, and stuck his arrows upward. In the night the bad men came and poked around there. They stuck themselves with his arrows, and went away. The next day the young man met another stranger, who warned him against bad rocks in his path. The youth tied pieces of flint to his feet. He walked through the rocks, breaking them with the flint. He continued on his way, and met another youth, who warned him against snakes. Again he tied flint to his feet. The snakes merely cut themselves against the flint. He walked on and met another man, who warned him against a bad tree. He walked towards it and threw his blanket under it. The tree fell on his blanket, and broke asunder.[2] He walked on and met another young man. The stranger said to him, "There are two bad old women over there. They call people to their lodge, then they strike and kill them with their elbows." The young man went to them. He peeped in at the door, and asked them for food. They bade him enter. Instead of passing in between them, he held out his blanket. They pierced it with their elbows, and, striking each other, were killed.[3] The young man ate up their food, and went away.

5. THE FOILED LOVERS

(Shoshone Story)

Two comrades were looking around for girls. One of them entered a girl's house. As he was crawling in, a pet owl belonging to the young woman breathed noisily. The man asked, "What's that you say?" Then the owl grabbed him by the cheek. He ran out. His comrade ran after him, asking, "What is the matter with you?" — "Look at my eyes," he said. They could not pull the owl off. Then the man's comrade tried to cut the bird's neck with his knife, but it only held on the tighter. Then they tried to cut its leg. They could not cut it. Finally they twisted its neck and killed it.

They went to a different place. The other man wished to try this time. "Sit down on those buffalo-hides," said the other man. The

[1] Lowie, *l. c.* p. 262.

[2] Compare Kroeber, *Gros Ventre Myths and Tales*, p. 84.

[3] The incident also occurs in Assiniboine mythology. It is found in the Dakota Potiphar tale (Riggs, *Dakota Grammar, Texts, and Ethnography*, p. 140).

W [171]

27: St. Clair & Lowie U,E-4,5 (no date) 1909
NO6 Comanche NO6
Wind River NQ19

W 539

young man went, and thought he was going to sit on the robes; but a colt rose with him, bucked around, and threw him into the brush. His comrade came to him. "They have found us out." Then they gave up their plan.

6. THE STAR-HUSBAND [1]

(*Shoshone Story*)

Once two young girls were lying outside their lodge and counting the stars. They said, "Would that those stars would come to us!" The next morning their people broke camp. The two girls were continually losing their belongings, and fell behind the rest of the people. They lost their paint-bags and went back for them. They found them and followed the trail. Looking back, they beheld two men, who soon caught up to them, and asked, "Do you two know us?" — "No," said the girls. Then the young men said, "We are those two stars you wished to come to you last night." Then the girls recognized them. The stars said, "We will take you above with us." The girls consented. Then all went up above. The stars married them.

Once, after a long time, one of the women said to her husband, "I am going with the others to dig roots." The star said, "Yes, but be sure not to dig up a big one." The woman went. While she was digging, she thought to herself, "I wonder why he forbade my digging up a big one." She dug up a big root. Looking down, she saw all her people. She came home crying. Her husband, knowing what she had done, said, "I told you not to look." The woman said, "I am going home." Her husband consented to let her go. The next morning all the people went hunting. They killed lots of buffalo. The next day they cut the skin into strips of rope. The woman's husband said to her, "Well, attach your child firmly; to-morrow they will let you down. When you get back home, you must tell your brothers not to look at your baby." In the morning they tied up the child and let down the woman with it. One of her brothers lying in his lodge saw her descending. "What is that falling from above?" The rest of the people looked for what he had seen, but could not detect it. "Something is the matter with your eyes," they said. He insisted he had seen something. After a while he again told them about it. Then they could see it. While they were gazing at the woman, she dropped to the ground. They untied the child. She said to them, "You must not see this child of mine." She lived with them for a long time. One day she went out to fetch wood, leaving her child at home. While she was gone, a sore-eyed brother of hers thought, "I wonder why she always said we must not see it." He arose and looked at it. She had said it was a baby, but he only found buckskin bundled up. Unwrapping it, he took some for a breech-clout. His sister returned. She cried when

[1] Wissler and Duvall, *Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians*, p. 58.

27: St. Clair & Lowie U,E-4,5 (no date) 1909
NO6 Comanche NO6
Wind River NQ19

W. 539

she found her child gone. Then she declared to her parents and her brothers, "I am going to follow my child's tracks." She went and touched the sky-rope, tied herself to it, and was pulled up to the sky. Her relatives all cried. They seized her youngest brother, the sōre-eyed one, and threw him into the fire.

7. THE EYE-JUGGLER[1]

(Shoshone Story)

Coyote was eating rose-berries. He heard some yüba'çidunò (a species of birds) crying, "Eyes, eyes!" He said, "Oh, I hear my brothers!" and ran toward them. They came up to him. "Halloo, my brothers! What are you eating? Tell me, and I will go with you." — "We are eating yampas (wild carrots)." — "How do you eat them?" — "We just throw our eyes on the brush, then the yampas fall down to us, together with our eyes. Throw your eyes on the brush now, crying, 'Eyes, eyes!'" Then Coyote threw his eyes up, and the yampas fell down to him. He ate them. "Oh, they are good!" he said. "This is a fine trick. Let us go around together now and practise it." He went with them, and they all fed on yampas. After a while Coyote said, "My brothers, I can do this by myself, too." He left them. He threw his eyes on a big brush, and the yampas fell down. He ate them. "This is good," he said. "I will always continue to do this." Again he threw his eyes on a big tree, crying, "Eyes, eyes!" His eyes did not come back to him. He repeatedly tried to get them back, but failed. Giving up hope, he went away.

Coyote got to the bank of a river, and sat down. On the other side he heard the jingling of bells.[2] "What kind of girls are you two?" he cried. — "We two are Ya'yaru girls. What kind of a man are you?" — "I am a Ya'yaru man," he replied. They said, "Come over to our side." — "No, do you two cross over here." The girls came over to him, and offered to build a shade-lodge. They went upstream and erected it. Coyote sat down inside. After a while he went out at one side of the entrance. When returning, he again missed the door. The girls said, "Why do you never use the entrance?" — "Don't try to tell me," he answered; "if we went out by the entrance, the enemy might charge upon us." They told him there were some buffalo resting on the hill. Coyote offered to kill one for them. He packed his quiver, and left, scenting for the buffalo-tracks. At last he got close to them, and repeatedly shot at them. By accident he hit one buffalo, and tried to locate it by its odor. The girls came running to him. "Oh, what are you looking for?" — "I am looking for my arrows." — "Why, you are standing on one of them." — "Well, I see it, but I won't pick it up before I find another one." At last he begged the girls to look for his arrows, and

[1] Wissler and Duvall, *l. c.* p. 29.

[2] For the following incidents, cf. Lowie, *l. c.* pp. 272, 273.

27: St. Clair & Lowie U,E-4,5 (no date) 1909
NO6 Comanche NO6
Wind River NQ19

W 539 they began to search. In the mean time he had found the slain buffalo, and skinned it, but split the skin in the wrong place. The girls returned with the arrows. "Oh, what are you doing?" — "What have I done?" — "Why, you cut the skin in the wrong place." He answered, "No, the larger piece is meant for the bigger one of you, and the other one is for the smaller one." Then they helped him, and they got through skinning. They carried the game home, and roasted the ribs. As they were sitting there, one of the girls said, "Something on the other side has a bad smell." — "It is the buffalo I killed."

After the meal, Coyote said, "I wish one of you to louse me." He rested his feet on one girl's lap, and the other began to pick his lice. The girl sitting at his feet happened to look into his face, and cried, "Why, there is a worm coming out of his eyes!" Then both examined his eyes, and found them full of worms. They went out, brought in a rotten log, and laid his head on it, while they placed his feet on a rock. Then they took their belongings, hung his quiver on a tree, and fled.

When Coyote woke up, he said, "Oh, louse me!" His head bumped against the log. He found that the women were gone. He tried to find them, but in vain. He also failed to discover his quiver. At last, by smelling around, he found it, and by scenting also found the girls' tracks. He ran along, and caught up to them. When he was close, they threw their bells down a cliff. Coyote heard the bells drop, and tumbled after them. The women laughed at him. "What is the sightless Coyote doing down there?" He said, "You are just talking. I have killed a big mountain-sheep, and am eating its marrow." The girls went home and told about him.

Coyote's older brother went to look for him. Finally he found him and brought him back. For a while he was sick, then he recovered. One day Coyote played at na'hanid. His brother bet on his success. Coyote missed the mark, and his side lost. After Coyote had gone to bed and was asleep, his brother looked at his eyes, and found that he was blind. "He's blind, that is why we were beaten." Early in the morning, while Coyote was still sleeping, his brother took a yearling buffalo's eyes and inserted them in the sleeping Coyote's sockets. Then he roused his younger brother. Coyote saw well. He repeatedly defeated the people at the game. This is how Coyote came to have a yearling buffalo's eyes.

8. DZŌ'AVITS[1]

(Shoshone Story)

W. [171] Dove was living with her two young ones. Once, while the mother was away, Dzō'avits stole the children. When Dove returned and found her children gone, she went to look for them. She got close to Dzō'avits'

[1] In Lemhi myths (Lowie, *l. c.* pp. 254–262), Dzō'avits is a gigantic ogre frequently combated by the Weasels.

27: St. Clair & Lowie U,E-4,5 (no date) 1909
NO6 Comanche NO6
Wind River NQ19

W 539

house and began to cry. Dzŏ'avits came out and scolded her. "Oh, what are you bothering around here for? You might as well go away, or I will beat you to death." She left. She met an Eagle, who asked her what she was looking for and why she was crying. She told him that Dzŏ'avits had stolen her young ones. Eagle gave her some tallow of an animal he had killed, its paunch, and some of his fuzzy feathers. Then he bade her go near the Dzŏ'avits' house. He hung his game on a high pine and told Dzŏ'avits to get it in the morning. Dzŏ'avits set out to fetch it, but could not get it down. While he was being delayed, Eagle freed the young Doves, who fled with their mother.

In the evening Dzŏ'avits returned. When he found his captives gone, he was furious. He followed their tracks, and nearly caught up to them. When he was very close, they were at the bank of a river, where a Crane was seated. "Dzŏ'avits is after my young ones, I wish you would help us across." Crane extended his leg as a bridge. "Well, cross over on my leg," he said. They crossed, and ran on.[1] Then Dzŏ'avits got to Crane. He asked whether the Doves had crossed there. "Yes," said Crane. Then Dzŏ'avits asked how they had crossed, and Crane told him. "Well, stretch out your leg for me, too." Crane extended his leg. While Dzŏ'avits was crossing the middle of the river, Crane pulled up his leg. Dzŏ'avits fell into the water. He swam, and reached the other bank. Then he again followed the fugitives' tracks.

Dzŏ'avits was again gaining on them. They got to a Chickadee. "Dzŏ'avits is after my children, help us cross," said the mother. "Well," said Chickadee, "enter my nostrils." They entered his nostrils. Chickadee blew them to the other side of the river. Then they continued their flight. Dzŏ'avits got to Chickadee, and inquired about the Doves. Chickadee told him how he had blown them to the other side. "Well, then blow me, too, to the other side." Chickadee bade him enter his nostrils, but only blew him into the middle of the river. Dzŏ'avits swam to the other bank. He again followed the Doves' tracks.

When he was close to them, the old Dove said to a Weasel, "Dzŏ'avits is after me, save us in some way." Weasel began to dig up the ground. "Go in here," he said. They entered, walked underground, and came out again at a great distance. Weasel then dug up the earth in another place. Dzŏ'avits came, and asked, "Did the Doves go in here?" Weasel said, "Yes, they have gone in here." — "Well, I also want to go in." He entered, but could not find anything. He got out again, and continued his pursuit.

When Dzŏ'avits got close to them, the old Dove threw down her tallow. It turned into a deep gulch behind them. Dzŏ'avits could not get through. He looked for a path. At last he found one and ran on. When he was close once more, Dove threw her paunch behind her. It turned into a big

[1] Lowie, *l. c.* p. 254.

27: St. Clair & Lowie U,E-4,5 (no date) 1909
NO6 Comanche NO6
Wind River NQ19

W 539

cliff. Dzŏ'avits could not climb up. He looked for a path. At last he found one. He ran on. When he had nearly caught up to them, she threw down her feathers. They turned into a fog. Dzŏ'avits lost the trail. At last he found it again, and ran on. When he was close again, Dove asked a Badger to save them in some way. Badger dug a hole, and bade them enter. When they were inside, he dug another hole and built a fire. Dzŏ'avits got to the place, and asked whether the Doves had entered there. Badger told him they had. "Well, I also wish to go in." He entered. As soon as he was inside, Badger heated rocks red-hot and cast them down, plugging up the hole. Then he called out to the Doves, "I have already killed Dzŏ'avits. Come out! You can go."

9. THE ROC [1]

(Shoshone Story)

Two Weasels went hunting. They killed some game, and dried the meat. The older brother said to the younger, "It is not good to eat at night. If any one builds a fire at night in this place, a bad owl will carry him away. You had best cook meat now, then you will not have to build a fire at night." The younger man cooked plenty of meat, lay down, and ate in bed. He ate up all he had cooked. During the night he rose and built a fire. "Oh, don't build a fire!" said the older man. His brother answered, "Oh, don't make believe it is bad! I will beat it to death." He laid a bone among the food. He ate and sang. After a while a loud sound was heard. He took the bone, and sat listening. The Owl came near and sat down. He struck at him with the bone, knocking him down. Owl seized the man, and carried him to his island home. Two young men were there, and one old woman. The young men told the new-comer, "To-morrow he will eat one of us." He replied, "In the morning we will kill him." Next day Owl killed one of the young men, ate part of him, and went hunting. While he was gone, the two surviving young men dug a hole, and put a flint on the blood of the slain victim, sticking it through his flesh. Owl returned, ate of the corpse, and was killed by the flint. The two youths went into the hole, took the bird's wing, and made a boat of it. As they were starving, they ate the old woman. Then they returned home.

10. COSMOGONIC FRAGMENTS

(Shoshone Story)

Our own Father (Ā'pŏ) made us.[2] First of all, he made the moose, then the elk, then the buffalo, then the deer, the mountain-sheep, the antelope,

[1] Lowie, *l. c.* p. 283. The story is a fragment of the Lemhi Lodge-Boy and Throwa-Away myth. The Owl corresponds to the mythical bird Nūneyunc.

[2] In the text there follow these two sentences: —

Ija apŏ gonɛ ma wehenge. damɛ-n- divij apŏ ke da sumbanain.
Wolf father fire him burnt. Our own father not we know.

27: St. Clair & Lowie U,E-4,5 (no date) 1909
NO6 Comanche NO6
Wind River NQ19

W 539

the crane, the chief of the birds, the big black eagle, the white-tailed bald eagle, the chicken-hawk (gi'ni) and the hŏ'mara, the owl, the crow, the magpie, and the dogo'a-rü'ka (snake-eater). Our Father made everything; he made us.

Our Father sent the Crow, who was sitting on a high mountain, to bring earth. "Get earth! I will once more create the drowned people." Then the Crow flew away, and after a while came back to the creator. "You must have been eating the drowned people. You stink. Go back! — Now, you, little Chickadee, bring dirt! Then I'll create all the people again." When the Chickadee returned with dirt, our Father made the earth and sky. We now walk on the ground he made. He said, "Now, my children, pray to me; then I will listen to you, and take pity on you."

The whole earth was covered with water. Only on a high mountain there was a dry spot.[1] Our Father sent the Crow to get earth in order to make our land. Then the Crow came back stinking. "You are crazy," said the Father; "you have eaten the drowned people. Now, go back, and go around homeless. You will eat whatever any one has killed. Go, now! You will be black." Then he said to the small birds, "Come, I will now hear which one of you has a good heart and good sense." He found that the Chickadee was the only one that had any sense and was good-hearted. Then he bade it bring earth. It brought it. Our Father made the earth out of it. "It will be small," he said, "for little hands brought it. You will have six moons. You will not lose track of tongues. You have good thoughts."[2]

C 539

II. THE HOODWINKED DANCERS

(*Comanche Story*)

Coyote met a Skunk. "Halloo, brother! I am very hungry. Let us work some scheme to get something to eat! I will lead the way, do you follow." — "Well, I will do whatever you propose." — "Over there is a prairie-dogs' village. We will stay here until daylight. In the morning you will go to the prairie-dog village and play dead. I will come later and say to the prairie-dogs, 'Come, let us have a dance over the body of our dead enemy!' Well, go there, puff yourself up, and play dead." Skunk followed his directions. Coyote got to the prairie-dogs. "Come, we will have a dance. Stop up your holes tight, let every one come here. Our enemy lies dead before us. Do you all stand in a big circle and dance with closed eyes. If any one looks, he will turn into something bad." As they were dancing, Coyote killed one of them. "Well, now all open

[1] Lowie, *l. c.* p. 247.

[2] The last sentences are obscure. There seems to be a reference to the connection between months and tongues, as indicated in one of the Comanche tales (p. 280).

27: St. Clair & Lowie U,E-4,5 (no date) 1909
NO6 Comanche NO6

539 your eyes! Look at this one; he opened his eyes and died. Now, all of you, close your eyes and dance again; don't look, or you will die!" They began to dance once more, and Coyote commenced to kill them. At last one of them looked. "Oh, he is killing us!" Then all the survivors ran for their holes. While they were trying to get in, he killed them. Coyote and Skunk gathered all the corpses and piled them up by a creek. They built a fire and cooked them.

"Well," said Coyote, "let us run a race for them! The one that wins shall have all the good fat ones." [1] — "Oh"! replied Skunk, "you are too swift; I am a slow runner, and can never beat you."— "Well, I will tie a rock to my foot." — "If you tie a big one, I will race with you." They were to run around a hill. Coyote said, "Well, go on ahead! I will catch up to you." Skunk began to run. Coyote tied a rock to his foot, and followed. Coyote said, "The one that is behind shall make a big fire, so there will be lots of smoke, and we shall be able to see where he is." Skunk got far ahead, and turned aside to hide. When Coyote had run past him, Skunk turned back to the meat-pile. Looking back, he saw a big column of smoke rising on the other side of the hill. He took all the meat and carried it home. He cut off all the tails and left them sticking out, with two poor little prairie-dogs for Coyote. Coyote thought Skunk was ahead of him. As he ran along, he said to himself, "I wonder where that fool is! I did not know he could outrun me." He got back to the pile, and saw the tails sticking out. He seized one, and it slipped out. He tried another one. "Oh, they are well cooked!" He tried another one. Then he got suspicious. He took a stick and raked up the fireplace, but could only find the two lean prairie-dogs. He thought some one must have stolen the meat. He ate the two lean prairie-dogs. Skunk, lying in his den, was watching him. As Coyote was standing to look around, Skunk threw one of the prairie-dog bones at him. Coyote then espied him lying in his camp. He saw all the meat around him. "Give me some of them!" — "No, we have run a race for them. I beat you, I am going to eat them all." Coyote begged him in vain for some food. Skunk ate it all. He was a better trickster than Coyote.

Another Version. — Coyote was knocking about on the prairie. There was a prairie-dog village there. Coyote got there. "Well, a bad disease is coming to us," he announced. The chief of the prairie-dogs, who was named Elk-Meat, went among his people, saying, "Coyote says a bad disease is coming to us." Coyote said, "Oh, tell your people we are going to dance." The chief told his people. "We will have it right in the centre of the camp." Then they gathered a lot of wood. Towards night-fall Coyote said, "Well, we are going to dance, a bad disease is coming." Then they gathered there and began to dance. While they were dancing,

[1] Compare Lowie, *l. c.* p. 274.

27: St. Clair & Lowie U,E-4,5 (no date) 1909
NO6 Comanche NO6

539

Coyote developed a scheme. As they came around to one side, he killed them with a stick while standing at the far end. Two little ones had just lost their mother. The younger of the two, peeping at Coyote, said, "O brother! they are killing us. What are we going to do? Let us run away!" He took the lead, and they fled. Looking back, one of them said, "Why, he is destroying all of us! He was merely deceiving us."

12. THE DESERTED CHILDREN [1]

(Comanche Story)

Long ago the Indians were camping in a certain place. Four children were playing by a creek. An older girl with a baby on her back came to join them. In the mean time all the Indians moved away without the children noticing it, as they were still playing by the creek. At last one of them happened to look up towards the camp and could not see the lodges. He called out to his mates, telling them the camp was broken. They called him a liar, and sent another one to look. He reported the same way. They did not believe him, either. A third one went to look, and also reported that all were gone. It was getting late in the evening. All left the creek and tried to follow the Indians' trail.

While they were going along, Coyote met them and warned them. "Right by the side of the road a big Owl has his house. Don't talk loudly when passing there, or he will hear you." They got to the house, and the little child began to cry. Owl heard him. "Bring my nephew here!" he said. The child thought it was really his uncle, and wanted to go to him. His older sister objected, but he persisted. At last she said, "Well, let us go over there!" Then all went to the Owl. The oldest girl was afraid. "The big Owl will eat us," she said. They got there. Owl immediately wanted to eat the child. The children began to plan how to escape. They said they wanted to wash by the creek. Owl permitted them to go, but bade them hurry back. They met a Frog there. "Frog, we are in trouble, and call upon you to help us. That Owl wants to eat us." — "Yes, I will help you." — "We are going to run off," they said. "When Owl calls us, do you answer for us, 'No, we are still washing.' Just continue fooling him, so that we will have a big start before he finds out." Owl called the children. Frog answered, "We are still washing." He repeatedly gave the same reply, fooling him. Owl at last thought they had run off. He went looking for them, and every few paces he called them as he went along. Frog continued to answer, "We are still washing." At last Owl came up to him. Frog said, "For once I have fooled you. The children went away a long time ago." Owl said, "You thin-legged rascal, you have been fooling me! You have let my game run away. I will kill you." He struck at him with his cane. Just as the

[1] Kroeber, *Gros Ventre Myths and Tales*, p. 102; Grinnell, *Blackfoot Lodge Tales*, p. 50.

27: St. Clair & Lowie U,E-4,5 (no date) 1909
NO6 Comanche NO6

539 cane descended, the Frog jumped into the water, leaving him standing on the bank.

Owl followed the children's trail. He had never been known to lose anything. After a short time he came in sight of them. They were fleeing as fast as they could. He was holding his stone club in his hand. They got to a big creek. There they saw a Fish-Crane sitting. "We are coming to you. That big Owl is after us. Help us!" He took a louse from his head, gave it to the oldest girl, and said, "Put this into your mouth. Though it tastes bad, do not spit it out before you get across to the other side. If you do this, I will make a bridge of my leg, so you can go across." She took the louse in her mouth, they crossed over, and then she spat out the louse. Owl got to Crane. "O Crane! there goes my game. Help me across! I want to catch them." Crane offered to let him cross on the same conditions as before. Owl spat out the louse in mid-stream, and fell into the river. He got out, and again pursued the children. He detected them in the open prairie. Seeing him, they were frightened. "What are we going to do?" A Buffalo-Calf was lying in front of them. "Buffalo-Calf, protect us!" — "I do not know whether I can help you, but I will try. Stand behind me!" Owl came up with his maul. "Oh, you're foolish! You know I won't retreat from you. That is my game, I will kill you." Calf stood still, pawing the ground. As Owl approached him, Calf charged on him, and threw him straight up to the moon. Hence the Owl is still sitting in the moon with its maul.

13. THE INDIAN AND THE BEAR

(Comanche Story)

An Indian was knocking about all by himself. A bear found him and gave chase. The Indian fled to the prairie. There he stood, not knowing what to do. Then he painted all his body green. "I will let him catch me." The bear caught up to him. The man stood still. Mentulae glandem retraxit(?). The bear said, "Ah, well! I guess he died yesterday or to-day." He went away, but after a while he came back and stood there, smelling the man. "He must have been dead for two days. Judging by the smell, he must have been dead longer than one day," he said.

14. TRICKSTER TALES

(Comanche Story)

Coyote was thinking how he might get some money. A great many soldiers were following his trail. Coyote took his kettle and dug out a place in the bank. There he made a fire and placed the kettle over it. He put in water, which began to boil. The soldiers were coming near. Their captain approached Coyote, asking him how he was. Coyote just continued cooking. The captain said, "You have a mighty good kettle!" — "Yes, it is a good one." — "Can't I buy it from you?" — "Oh, I

27: St. Clair & Lowie U,E-4,5 (no date) 1909
NO6 Comanche NO6

539

think a great deal of it." The captain said, "Well, I will give you my horse for it." — "Oh, no! You must offer something I care for very much." — "Well, I will give you two horses." — "My kettle is a mighty good one." — "Well, select whatever two horses you wish for it." Coyote then picked out two very fine horses, and departed. The soldiers left with their kettle. When they camped, they set the kettle down, poured in water, and sat watching to see it boil. They had to wait a very long time. "Evidently Coyote has got the better of us," they said. From that time on, the whites have always traded with the Indians. Coyote taught us to do so.

Second Version.[1] — One white man had heard a great deal about Coyote's trickery. He said, "Oh, I want to see him! Did you ever hear of any person getting cheated right before his eyes? Go, bring him here! I'll see whether he can beat me that way." Coyote was walking along a short distance away. One of them spied him. "There is Coyote, who always cheats everybody." The white man got out to look at him. He put on very fine clothes, mounted a good horse, and loped after Coyote until he caught up to him. "Hold on, my friend! I have heard how you always cheat people." Coyote answered, "Oh, you are mistaking me!" — "Oh, no! Go ahead and cheat me out of something." Coyote said, "My stuff for scheming is not here." — "Where is it, then, the stuff you cheat people with?" — "I have it at my house." — "Well, go fetch it and fool me!" Coyote said, "Lend me your horse." — "Where is your house?" — "Over the hill." The white man dismounted and lent him his horse. The horse was afraid of Coyote. Coyote said, "Give me all your clothes, or he will be afraid of me." So the white man gave Coyote all his clothes. Coyote put them on, mounted, and loped off. "I have fooled you already. You certainly are easily cheated." The white man stood there, waving to him to return; but Coyote did not mind him, and galloped away.

Third Version. — A short while after this adventure, Coyote was sauntering along a creek. He saw many people moving along with mules and horses. Coyote was eager to get some of them. He addressed the people, telling them they could camp by a certain clump of trees. They were small trees, which he had already cut into. The people followed his advice, and staked their horses to those little trees. In the night all the mules and horses broke loose. Coyote, who was watching at a distance from the camp, then drove them off. This is why Indians long ago always used to steal so many horses.

[1] Lowie, *l. c.* p. 278.

27: St. Clair & Lowie U,E-4,5 (no date) 1909
NO6 Comanche NO6

15. THE EYE-JUGGLER[1]

(Comanche Story)

539 Coyote was always knocking about hunting for something. He came to a creek, where there was nothing but green willows. Two little yellow-birds were playing there. He came up to them. Laughing, they pulled out their eyes and threw them on the trees, while they stood below. "Eyes, fall!" they said. Then their eyes fell back into their sockets. Coyote went to them. He greatly admired their trick. "O brothers! I wish to play that way, too." — "Oh, we won't show you, you are too mean. You would throw your eyes into any kind of a tree and lose them." — "Oh, no! I would do it just like you." At last the birds agreed to show him. They pulled out his eyes, threw them up, and said, "Eyes, fall!" Then his eyes fell back again. Coyote was well pleased. He pulled out his eyes himself, threw them up, and said, "Eyes, fall!" They returned to their places. "Let us all go along this creek!" said the birds. "Other people will see us and take a fancy to us." They went along playing. Coyote said, "I am going over there. I know the trick well now." He left them. He got to another creek. A common willow-tree was standing there. "There is no need to be afraid of this tree. I'll try it first." He pulled out his eyes, and threw them at the tree. "Eyes, fall!" he shouted. His eyes did not fall. He thus became blind. He tied something around his eyes, and left.

Walking along the creek, he met two young girls. "What kind of girls are you?" — "We are Ya'yaru girls." — "We all belong to the same people, then; I am a Ya'yaru young man." The two girls did not know he was blind. He asked them, "Where are you going?" — "We are going over there." — "Well, we will all go together." They debated the matter, then all went together. One girl said, "Just look at the buffaloes there!" Coyote laughed. "I was wondering how soon you would catch sight of them, that's why I would not tell you about them." When they had gone a little farther, one of the girls asked the other, "Why does he not kill one of those buffaloes for us?" Coyote laughed, "I was wondering how long it would take you to think of that, that's why I would not tell you before. Go around that way to the other side of the buffalo, then they won't see you. Then they will run here, and I will kill one for us." They followed his directions. The buffaloes, seeing them, ran towards Coyote. When they came nearer, he shot at them and killed one by chance. When the girls ran up, they said, "He has really killed one." Coyote laughed. "I was wondering how soon they would see it, that's what I was thinking about you." They were skinning and cutting up the buffalo. One of the girls exclaimed, "Oh, is n't he fat!" Coyote said, "Why, certainly, I was looking for a fat one. I strained my eyes mightily hunting for a fat one." The two girls said,

[1] Compare the Wind River variant, p. 269.

27: St. Clair & Lowie U,E-4,5 (no date) 1909
N06 Comanche N06

"Does n't he know well how to look for a fat one?" Coyote said, "Do you two cut it up, I will build us a house by the creek." He went off to make them a lodge. There were big holes in it everywhere, because he was blind. He made it of brush. The two girls came with the meat. They said, "This must be a house built by a blind man, there are holes all over." Coyote laughed. "Oh, you two don't understand. Why, I built it this way so that if lots of enemies charge on us, we might go out in any direction. There is no danger here of our being hemmed in." The girls said, "We did not think of that." They made their home there, both becoming Coyote's wives.

Once Coyote said to them, "Louse me." The women sat down, and Coyote placed his head on one, and his feet on the other. For a while they loused him, then he fell asleep. One of the women said, "Let us pull off this rag from his head! He won't know anything about it, he's asleep. Let us look at his eyes." She raised the cover. "Why, he is blind! There are lots of worms in his eyes." The one on whose lap his head was resting bade her companion bring a stump with lots of ants on it. "Put it under his head, and fetch another one without ants for his feet." After they had fixed the stumps, one of them said, "Let us go now!" The older sister said, "Take hold of those bells!" They got some distance away from Coyote. Shortly after they had left, the ants began to bite him. He began butting with his head. "Oh, be easy, you two, louse me!" He tried to butt them, but only struck the ground. He woke up, and looked for their trail. Looking back, the women saw him coming. They began to run. "That is surely Coyote there. Let us beat him by that big red bluff." The older sister said, "Tear off those bells of yours." She pulled them off. "He can't see us, he is just following the bells. When we get to the red bluff, drop your bells, and he will fall over it." Coyote was pursuing them. The woman's bells were jingling as they ran along. When they got to the cliff, she dropped them. Coyote, hearing the bells, followed after them, and was crushed to pieces. The women went home.

16. REGULATION OF THE SEASONS;[1] ORIGIN OF DEATH[2]

(*Comanche Story*)

Coyote called all the people together to decide how many winter months and how many summer months there ought to be. They set up a large council lodge. Coyote sat down in the centre on the west side. He said, "Well, listen to me! We are to decide how many winter and summer months there are to be." One man said, "Well, let us have six cold months; let the seventh be cold in the first half, and the remainder

[1] Lowie, *l. c.* p. 274. Cf. Boas, "Eine Sonnensage der Tsimschian" (*Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 1908, pp. 781–797).

[2] Wissler and Duvall, *l. c.* p. 20.

27: St. Clair & Lowie U,E-4,5 (no date) 1909
NO6 Comanche NO6

539 warm." Coyote said, "Six cold months would be too much, we should suffer from the cold. Ten summer months would be good." Another man said, "If we had ten summer months, our meat would spoil, we should suffer from heat." Then they debated. One little man sitting by the door, who was named Snow-Bird, said, "Well, let us have six cold months, with one month half cold and one half cool." Coyote was in favor of ten hot months, because he wished to play a trick on them. They were debating. The little man by the door got up, and said, "Six cold months is plenty for us." Saying, "Six months," he went out. All the assembly rose and followed him, repeating, "Six months." Coyote bade them wait. "What makes you pay any attention to that little man?" But the people did not listen to Coyote, who was thus unable to work his scheme on them. He went out last of all, saying, "We shall have six winter months." All the people laughed at him. "This is the first time you have failed to have your way," Coyote said, "Now we shall have six cold months. Now, then, let us have another council to name the months." When they had gathered, he announced, "The little man shall have just as many tongues as there are cold months." Then he named the months: "October, November, December, January, February, March, April." All agreed. "The little man will have seven tongues; every month one of his tongues will pass away until but one is left."[1]

After the council was over, Coyote said, "Now, do all of you go over there! I shall join you, and we will decide whether our dead should return after the lapse of four days. Long ago that was our way. To-day I object to our dead coming back." They met. He called them all to the edge of the water. He picked up a rock, held it in his hand, and spoke as follows: "Behold, our dead people shall do as this rock!" He cast it into the water. "This rock will not come back. Similarly, our people will not return. This earth is very large; but if the dead were to come back, it would get crowded. That is why I object to it." All the people agreed with him. Since then our dead have not returned.

[779]

17. THE LIBERATION OF BUFFALO[2]

(Comanche Story)

Long ago two persons owned all the buffalo. They were an old woman and her young cousin. They kept them penned up in the mountains, so that they could not get out. Coyote came to these people. He summoned the Indians to a council. "That old woman will not give us anything. When we come over there, we will plan how to release

[1] Compare Culin, *Free Museum of Science and Art, Bulletin*, 1901, p. 20 (Wind River Shoshone).

[2] Grinnell, *l. c.* p. 145; Kroeber, *l. c.* p. 65; Dorsey and Kroeber, *Traditions of the Arapaho*, p. 276.

27: St. Clair & Lowie U,E-4,5 (no date) 1909
NO6 Comanche NO6

539

the buffalo." They all moved near the buffalo-inclosure. "After four nights," said Coyote, "we will again hold a council as to how we can release the buffalo. A very small animal shall go where the old woman draws her water. When the child gets water, it will take it home for a pet. The old woman will object; but the child will think so much of the animal, that it will begin to cry and will be allowed to keep it. The animal will run off at daybreak, and the buffalo will burst out of their pen and run away." The first animal they sent failed. Then they sent the Kill-dee (dŏ'i).

When the boy went for water, he found the Kill-dee and took it home. "Look here!" he said to his cousin, "this animal of mine is very good." The old woman replied, "Oh, it is good for nothing! There is nothing living on the earth that is not a rascal or schemer." The child paid no attention to her. "Take it back where you got it," said the woman. He obeyed. The Kill-dee returned.

The people had another council. "Well, she has got the better of these two. They have failed," said Coyote; "but that makes no difference. Perhaps we may release them, perhaps we shall fail. This is the third time now. We will send a small animal over there. If the old woman agrees to take it, it will liberate those buffalo; it is a great schemer." So they sent the third animal. Coyote said, "If she rejects this one, we shall surely be unable to liberate the game." The animal went to the spring and was picked up by the boy, who took a great liking to it. "Look here! What a nice pet I have!" The old woman replied, "Oh, how foolish you are! It is good for nothing. All the animals in the world are schemers. I'll kill it with a club." The boy took it in his arms and ran away crying. He thought too much of his pet. "No! this animal is too small," he cried. When the animal had not returned by nightfall, Coyote went among the people, saying, "Well, this animal has not returned yet; I dare say the old woman has consented to keep it. Don't be uneasy, our buffalo will be freed." Then he bade all the people get ready just at daybreak. "Our buffalo will be released. Do all of you mount your horses." In the mean time the animal, following its instructions, slipped over to the pen, and began to howl. The buffalo heard it, and were terrified. They ran towards the gate, broke it down, and escaped. The old woman, hearing the noise, woke up. The child asked, "Where is my pet?" He did not find it. The old woman said, "I told you so. Now you see the animal is bad, it has deprived us of our game." She vainly tried to hold the buffalo back. At daybreak all the Indians got on their horses, for they had confidence in Coyote. Thus the buffalo came to live on this earth. Coyote was a great schemer.

27: St. Clair & Lowie U,E-4,5 (no date) 1909
NO6 Comanche NO6

18. THE SEVEN STARS[1]

(Comanche Story)

539 A very long time ago there lived a family of seven. The parents got angry at their children, four of whom were boys, and the youngest a girl. The father declared to them, "We are going to call a council of all the people. You cannot stay here. We are going to have a council to decide what all of you are to become. I am angry at you. All of you will go far off. Make up your minds as to what you wish to become." Then the oldest brother asked the other children to give their advice as to what they were to become. One of them said, "Our father is angry at us. Let us all become stars. Would that all of us might become stars! Whatever we choose, that we shall turn into. Let us wait for our father, and tell him as soon as he returns." When their father returned, he consented to let them become stars. Then they left. That is how they became stars. That is why there are seven stars looking down upon us from above. The one in the rear is the youngest child, while the young men are in front.

[171]

[1] In a more elaborate Assiniboine tale, a group of brothers debate what they are to turn into, and ultimately become stars.